

- [I AM Navy Medicine](#)
- RSS :
- [Posts](#)
- [Comments](#)

[Navy Medicine](#)

World Class Care... Anytime, Anywhere

- [Home](#)
- [About](#)
- [Disclaimer](#)
- [Navy Medicine News](#)
- [Navy Medicine WebSite](#)
- [I AM Navy Medicine](#)

Type and hit enter to Search

Written on August 25, 2015 at 6:34 am by [svanderwerff](#)

[What is More Frightening than a Great White Shark?](#)

Filed under [Communication](#), [Community Support](#), [Corpsman](#) {[no comments](#)}

Hospital Corpsman 1st Class Luke Peet, preventive medicine technician, Directorate for Public Health, USNS COMFORT (TAH-20)



Hospital Corpsman 1st Class Luke Peet, a native of Bakersfield, California, assigned to Navy Environmental Preventive Medicine Unit-2 in Norfolk Virginia, observes a mosquito before testing it for diseases. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Derek Paumen)

Over the years there have been numerous films and documentaries on the great white shark. This feeding frenzy of fear roughly began in the 1970's, when Peter Benchley's book "Jaws" was brought to life on the silver screen.

Those frightful images and depictions of the great white shark have been seared into the minds of thousands, and have even modified human behavior as some people opt to not swim in the ocean in fear of being their next meal. The great white's size, razor sharp teeth, and knack for the element of surprise help drive this fear in humankind.

However, what if I told you that there is a far more efficient killer than the great white. These killers are smaller than a dime, weigh in at a whopping 2.5 milligrams, and were responsible for the deaths of more than 660,000 people last year. This killer is the mosquito, and what seems strange is that it is not typically viewed as a serious threat by the general population.



Hospital Corpsman 1st Class Luke Peet, discusses mosquito traps with Salvadoran vector base experts during a subject matter expert exchange. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Andrew Schneider)

During the Continuing Promise 2015 (CP-15) mission, 11 countries in Central America, South America and the Caribbean will be visited. During the first eight of 11 mission stops, the vector control team, led by entomologist Lt. Cmdr. James Dunford, has been engaged on the front lines in an epic battle against mosquitoes, particularly the *Aedes* and *Anopheles* species.

These two groups of mosquitoes transmit three of 11 major mosquito-borne diseases, that include malaria (*Anopheles*), chikungunya and dengue fever (*Aedes*). This battle is being fought using several different approaches, with the goal of establishing and expanding upon collaborative control strategies across international borders. These strategies include education, field surveillance, and cost effective, environmentally sound, integrated pest management techniques.

The education part of our mission comes with a two pronged attack. First, we engage with the general public at medical sites during public health education fairs. Most people understand that mosquitoes transmit disease, but it varies as to what is done to prevent the spread of the diseases they carry. One of our objectives is to try and change the attitudes toward disease prevention by reaching out to children. This is done by using educational coloring kits and catching mosquito larvae and adults to show them how to identify mosquitoes and teach them where they like to live.



Hospital Corpsman 1st Class Luke Peet (left), and Lt. Cmdr. James Dunford, an entomologist and native of Twin Lakes, Wis., both assigned to Navy Environmental Preventive Medicine Unit-2 in Norfolk Va., examine a mosquito trap during a subject matter expert exchange during Continuing Promise 2015. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Andrew Schneider)

Next, we participate in subject matter expert exchanges with regional vector control teams at each mission stop. These exchanges are mutually beneficial, as we learn about how each country conducts business in their struggle to control mosquito populations. Some countries have adequate resources and operate a complete vector control program from public education to implementing an array of control methods. Other counties do not have the resources and personnel. During these exchanges, we discuss mosquito surveillance and control techniques, monitoring insecticide resistance, and then depart for practical application in the field.

The field work is by far my favorite part of this mission, and I never get tired of it. Each country has offered a wealth of knowledge and Indiana Jones-like adventures. I could go on for days about my experiences in the field, but the best part of these adventures is the "light bulb" effect. This is when you see the faces of the host nation vector control teams after retrieving the contents of a mosquito trap, and they realize what a powerful tool the traps can be in determining areas that require control countermeasures before disease transmission occurs.



Lt. Cmdr. James Dunford donates a pesticide sprayer to the local government pest control team. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Lance Hartung)

We complete our engagements by teaching pesticide application techniques, to include education on the proper protective equipment required while applying pesticides.

Overall, I think we have established long-term partnerships in the host nations we have visited. We keep in contact with the vector control teams after we pull anchor because we are trying to establish a network that continues to share ideas and methodologies.

You probably won't ever see any Hollywood-blockbuster movies that glorify the mosquito's ability to cause pain, suffering, and sometimes death (largely due to the lack of big teeth), but if they ever did make such a film I would want the lead role of the fedora-wearing adventurer who bravely slathers on insect repellent and carries a backpack sprayer deep into the jungle to place surveillance traps in countries with endemic malaria, and setting an experimental super gadget designed to save the world from the stealthy mosquito.

The views expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Department of the Navy, Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government.

[← Next post](#) [Previous post →](#)

svanderwerff tagged this post with: [Aedes](#), [Anopheles](#), [Chikungunya](#), [Continuing Promise](#), [corpsman](#), [dengue fever](#), [entomologist](#), [Environmental Preventive Medicine](#), [malaria](#), [medical](#), [mosquitoes](#), [Navy](#), [Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center](#), [Navy Medicine](#), [Public Health](#) Read 234 articles by [svanderwerff](#)